

A  
L E T T E R

T O

DR. JAMES BUTLER, OF IRELAND,

OCCASIONED BY HIS LATE PUBLICATION,

INTITLED,

"A JUSTIFICATION OF THE TENETS OF THE ROMAN  
CATHOLIC RELIGION,"

BY PHILEMON,

Βραχία βολομένου μου γυμνασάι, ανιχισθε ορθοτάτου  
δογμαῖο πραισάμενου.

Origen. contra Marc. sect. iii. p. 70.

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L O N D O N,

PRINTED FOR AND SOLD BY J. P. AND C. RIVINGTON,

1787.

J. B. T. H. R.

DR. JAMES BUTLER OF IRELAND

DECEASED BY HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

A TESTAMENTARY TRUST OF THE ESTATE

OF THE SAID DR. JAMES BUTLER

IN TRUST FOR

THE SAID DR. JAMES BUTLER

DECEASED

BY HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

IN TRUST FOR

THE SAID DR. JAMES BUTLER

DECEASED

L E T T E R

<sup>T O</sup>

Dr. Butler.

S I R,

**A**N apology for addressing You, though unknown is unnecessary, because You have submitted your case to the Public; and of course every person who pleases claims a right of giving you an answer: for as to the bar you plead at the close of your pamphlet, it cannot be admitted till You make it appear You have the sole and exclusive privilege of talking as much as You please, and as You please, and then to silence the voice of the Public at your pleasure.

Your pamphlet however I should never have read, had I not been decoyed in a man-



ner by the title page; "A Justification of the  
"Tenets of the Roman Catholic Religion,"  
published in a Protestant Country, nay, in  
the very teeth of a Protestant Public, carried  
with it something so singularly bold, not to  
employ a harsher expression, that I concluded  
your great learning and abilities had struck  
out something new and supported by irrefragi-  
ble arguments, in defence of opinions and  
tenets in themselves odious, repeatedly ex-  
amined and confuted by protestants, to the  
silence and confusion of their authors and  
abettors. On the perusal I found myself  
miserably deceived by a long, desultory, and  
miserable harangue, unimportant unless You  
conceived it would give You importance, and,  
in my humble opinion, extremely injudicious.  
To answer so voluminous a production page  
by page, might be imposed on a penitent in  
form of penance to compensate enormity of  
guilt; but as I have neither robbed nor mur-  
dered, I shall resign the task as better adap-  
ted to those who have. There are however



so many exceptionable articles floating on the stream of your eloquence that I could not refrain collecting a few, and presenting You with them together with some animadversions, which probably may tend to a more circumspect regulation of your future conduct.

One of the principal designs in your publication, if I understand your arguments and reasoning, is to claim merit as a good and obedient subject though a roman catholic priest, and a titular bishop of the province of Munster, in Ireland; and this rests on your having with alacrity subscribed the oath of Allegiance.

But, Sir, You will give me leave to inform You, that though You subscribe the oath of Allegiance, You cannot be a good subject in the eye of the law, nor in the judgment of any considerate person. You may be a subject at whom government may wink, whom it may suffer, whom it may not punish; but

You cannot be a GOOD subject; the most You can attain to in your situation is being good by halves. In all societies the governing power is the master; and every individual of that society is the servant to that power, or master; and You, particularly, are not to be informed, that he who doth not the will of his master, though he be not beaten with many stripes, yet cannot be accounted a good servant. That You do not comply with the will of government though You subscribe the oath of Allegiance, is now to be considered.

The government of Great Britain and of Ireland require of every subject, that he shall acknowledge the King to be supreme in matters civil and ecclesiastical. By the oath of Allegiance he is acknowledged supreme in civil matters only. So that to be in REALITY the GOOD subject You would appear, You must make an acknowledgement, unfeignedly, that he is also supreme in all matters ecclesiastical. Till You mentally comply with this



TACIT requisition; and publicly when called upon for that purpose, You cannot be deemed a GOOD subject.

But, Sir, You must give me leave to state to You, that by your ACTIONS You are not merely negatively not a GOOD subject, but positively a BAD one. No public titles or offices, civil or ecclesiastical, in Great Britain or Ireland, can be created or assumed but under sanction of government. You have assumed the title and office of a bishop in Ireland. You not only permit yourself to be so addressed and considered without reluctance, but by your own consent, in your own publication; and as such You act. I beg leave to ask You, Who created You a bishop in Ireland? In the list of Irish bishops I do not reconnoitre your name, which, had You been LEGALLY appointed I certainly should. You are then appointed by some other power; on the strength of which You assume the title and office, not in obedience to, but in con-



8 A LETTER TO

tempt of, the legal government of that kingdom. Thus, in the moment you contemptuously despise government, and seditiously counteract its will, You have the unblushing modesty to plead your merit as a GOOD subject: trampling at the same instant on that which You consider as the law of God, the injunction of the apostle, which enjoins You, "to submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the King as supreme."——

Your act in accepting this titular bishopric; glorying in it as You do, by exposing to public view your address under that title; and acting under the same as a bishop; make You guilty of a high misdemeanor: for you place a supreme over the head of the King who, under God, is alone supreme; and with your airy, visionary title which cannot fit the head of a man of sense, You spit in the face of majesty, and spurn the laws.

Were not the folly of mankind extended, as experience evinces, beyond the limits of credibility, one would wonder where men should be found to be converted into such dupes; but pride and ambition are powerful springs to human actions; and those who have false judgments may conceive false titles to be better than none: and though the emoluments arising from such a titular craft may not be very great, yet a question may arise, How the possessor by any other craft could make so much of his time, as by a deliberate and determined resistance to the lenity of that government by which he is protected?

But I am concerned, Sir, to inform You, that even your sincerity in taking the oath of Allegiance comes in a very questionable shape. And though there were all the merit attached to it which You seem to claim, and which I by no means discover, yet the form, the manner, the preparatives to swallowing that dose indicate disgust by the antecedent hesitation



and doubt. You are not to consider me in this case the impeacher, it is You who impeach yourself, and I sum up the evidence; or rather, it is your imprudence that has impeached You: for though A BISHOP, You appear not altogether so wise as the serpent, though as HARMLESS as the dove.

The oath of Allegiance was to be taken; the alternative, the loss of your titular bishopric, and you must decamp from Ireland. Conscience in one scale, and ambition in the other, kept the balance at an equipoise. It is a matter of conscience; Who shall decide it? Scripture and reason tell us, that a matter of conscience can no where be so properly decided as in a court of conscience which every man holds within himself, because, "if our conscience condemn us not, then have we confidence."---But You determined otherwise, and no doubt you had your reasons; you discarded the sacred, and applied to human, oracles. The case in which your



conscience was contained is dispatched in a packet to the reverend Fathers of the Sorbonne, that those reverend gentry with their plastic hands might mould your conscience to the oath of Allegiance; or, if this exceeded their art, then with the skilful sheers of equivocation, to cut the oath of allegiance to fit your conscience.

One would have imagined that to have consulted at the shrine of so respectable an oracle as the Sorbonne, or modern Delphi, would have been sufficient for the occasion; but your doubts were not only gloomy but weighty, and not to be dispelled or removed by the aid of one oracular response, though the oracle were of ever so high estimation. The case with conscience must travel again embalmed in PURE Latin to the cardinal Protector of Ireland, as You stile him, and I thank you for this piece of intelligence. His excellency, or his highness, or his eminence, for I have to beg that both He and You will

excuse me in the appendages of his address should I give them improperly, was at Rome; but no distance was ever deemed too great when an oracle was to be consulted: and your petition was accordingly presented at the shrine of the cardinal, ay, the cardinal Protector of Ireland. Thus the cardinal Protector of Ireland, has also the honour of being cardinal Protector of your conscience; or, should this displease you, he shall be dubbed master of the ceremonies, by your appointment, to the oath of Allegiance, that it may be introduced in all due form and etiquette to your ceremonious conscience.

You see, Sir, it is not I who impeach; but yourself and your own imprudence. Here is hesitation and doubt; and where can a cheerful compliance, and that sincerity you boast, find a place amidst such doubt and hesitation? Where neither of these exist, the party goes directly forward in the business before him diverging neither to right nor left;



but you who are wavering and uncertain pass to left and right for assistance, and council, and to shackle your conscience with the opinions of other men. If you had not been doubtful in yourself, you would not have sought the council of others; it was therefore a question with You, whether or not you ought to take the oath of Allegiance; and yet you assume merit from taking it with alacrity! Suppose, Sir, the oracle at Sorbonne, and the oracle at Rome, had given this answer: You cannot with a safe conscience, and therefore You ought not to take the oath of Allegiance. In such case, I presume, all your boasted merit would have been bemired. You ought then in justice to give the merit where it is due; your oracles claim it, not You: as to yourself You are nothing more than a mere machine, or instrument in this business, and as such, I see no reason why another response from the same quarters, whenever caprice shall so order it, may not turn You the contrary way. For I will not



suppose you to prevaricate, by asserting You had an opinion of your own which you would have persisted in whatever might have been the determination of the oracles ; because this would have been making the College of Sorbonne, and the cardinal Protector of Ireland, the bubbles of your dissimulation : and if this be not so, then it is They who touch the wires, and You who dance.

Persuaded as I am of treading on tender ground so long as I move in the regions of conscience, yet I cannot relinquish the subject without suggesting to you, that circumstanced as You are, You might very reasonably have had your doubts in taking the oath of Allegiance, even though supported in so doing by your oracles at Sorbonne, and at Rome. Is there not a clause in that oath of Allegiance tantamount to this, for I have not your publication by me, *That You will not be abetting to any person who shall attempt, nor will You yourself attempt, any thing against the person*

*of the King, his crown, or dignity?* May I then ask you, Sir, When You permitted a foreign power, or indeed any other power than the King's, to create You a bishop in Ireland, and when you so accepted that office, and acted in it; are You, or are You not guilty of abetting another person in making an attempt, and of making yourself an attempt, against the King's crown and dignity? You somewhere talk of mental reservation which might be assumed by your inferior priests, and it should seem this stratagem is not to be confined to them alone, for, in your situation, I should as soon have thought of swallowing the kingdom of Ireland, as that oath. But whatever oath you take principally concerns yourself, though it may remind us of a passage we read when school-boys, *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*

May I take the Liberty to ask you, Sir, as it is a circumstance quite novel to me, Who constituted the cardinal Protector of Ireland?



I had always concluded, and you will excuse my ignorance, that the King's Majesty, under God, was the Protector of Ireland, and that it was included in his title of supremacy. Who, Sir, was in the conspiracy to rob him of this part of his title; for as to You, Sir, you seem only the abettor, in addressing him by that title: the cardinal it is true is the thief who runs off with it, but where is he who stole it, and then gave it to the cardinal? This mysterious juggle lies between the cardinal and You; and I think it is to be explained thus: You, Sir, compliment the cardinal with the Protectorship of Ireland, to which he has as good a title as You to be a bishop of Ireland; and the cardinal in return compliments you with a bishopric in Ireland, to which your title is as good as his to the Protectorship. On my word, gentlemen, though you are two grave, yet are ye two very facetious fellows!---but there is a season when prudent men should bundle up their fooleries, and lay them aside.



But there is something worse in this than a foolish and childish sport. You either are, or are not a bishop of Ireland; if you are a legal bishop, why do You not enjoy the emoluments pertaining to your legal bishopric, and enforce the laws against those who resist You? Or shall we impute this moderation to Your clemency? If You are not a legal bishop of Ireland, then You have assumed a forged character, a grave character as it should seem; yet not satisfied with the fraud, You publish and sink into ridicule, and drag your companion, his highness the Protector along with You. Whatever this language might be to another, it cannot be severe when applied to You, who, while You would thrust yourself forward as a good subject, seditiously spurn at government, and, in that which You conceive to be the most important province in government, I mean the ecclesiastical, You filch from the crown a part of its supreme power; convey it into other hands; from those hands take out a commission; and enlist

under the banner of a foreign prince. Thus enlisted, dare You decline, even against your lawful Prince and country, to contend when opportunity may offer, in favour of that foreign prince and his pretended supremacy?

To set this matter on its proper footing, I will at any time retract what I have here advanced that may favour of severity, and will sue for pardon, when you shall have publicly professed and subscribed, "That George the  
" Third, King of Great Britain and Ireland,  
" is supreme over all persons whatsoever in  
" all matters ecclesiastical as well as civil  
" within the realms of Great Britain and  
" Ireland." Till You comply with this, affect not to amuse us with your specious goodness as a subject, lest some should suspect You are peaceable from the want of a fair opportunity of being otherwise.

Ireland, Sir, has a king and a parliament, by whose joint consent all laws are enacted



civil and ecclesiastical; and under the sanction of one or both all offices civil and ecclesiastical are established, and offices to them appointed. Whoever therefore appoints to an office, the powers aforementioned alone excepted, acts contrary to law; and he who accepts of a public office by such appointment, acts contrary to law; and whoever creates a new office in the state, acts contrary to law; and whoever is aiding, assisting, or abetting in any of the abovementioned crimes, cannot be innocent. These are bold truths, and will look guilt out of countenance. I ask You, Sir, who made the cardinal Protector of Ireland; who is consenting and abetting to his having that title by addressing him under that title; who created You a bishop of Ireland; and under what right do You presume to assume that character, and to act in it? These questions are put not to disconcert, but to give You an opportunity, as You would be thought a good subject, of exculpating yourself from acting in direct opposition to the



laws of that land in which You live, and by which You are protected.

You throw out the signal of distress for that part of Ireland where You reside, giving us to understand, that were it not for your labours, and the labours of those who serve under You, so great is the neglect of protestant teachers, that the people would be destitute of all religious worship. This picture is your own, You have drawn the sketch, rubbed in the dead colouring, and touched upon that with a few finishing strokes, such as your genius or abilities might prompt. I do not say there is no resemblance, or that the representation has not some truth. But this I may venture to assert from your own account, and from your pathetic remonstrance of your labours in the service, that even YOUR endeavours have been unsuccessful, and piety's labour has been lost: for your religious clients have either profited too much, or too little, from the unwearied lessons bestowed on their in-

struction: and methinks if You left these ungrateful rascals, You would do yourself, and them, and the public, so notable an act of justice as might deservedly merit commendation,

It may possibly be in religion as in matrimony, where it is better to possess no wife at all, than a very bad one. You, Sir, are a casuist and can determine this point. For though You are not licensed to marry, You can pathetically lament the deprivation of the comforts of that state in behalf of yourself and fraternity, with as much feeling as though You had really enjoyed them, or were inspired to breathe them; by the like inspiration You may be enabled to decide the above case. I know not how the matter stands in Ireland; in England the religion You profess is considered as no religion, or, to express myself more properly, it is worse than no religion; it is not only forbid to be taught, but to be publicly professed: this is full conviction,



that in the eye of the law, it were preferable to have no religion, than that religion. All other religions are tolerated; THAT is absolutely suppressed. As these are the sentiments of King and People of England, and the King of England being also King of Ireland, it might not be taken amiss if You and your fraternity of Priests were to recede in peace, and disclaiming this obstinate obtrusion, leave the article of religion to those who are at least equally well qualified with yourselves to promote it; and who have the sanction of government for that purpose.

But as to this neglect of religious duty, Why should you speak of it as particularly striking in Ireland? the complaint is general in all the established religions, whether in roman catholic countries, or in protestant nations; the like spirit of indifference, neglect, and slothful indolence seems to have pervaded to all denominations of priests officiating in the established religion of the country.

Reading some years since the two large folio volumes (my patience astonishes me!), of the works of a celebrated Italian preacher whom you possibly may know by the name of "*Il Padre Paoli Segneri*" the title of which book is "*Il Cristiano istruito*," I remember a passage wherein he says to the best of my recollection, That he went an hundred miles through the villages, (of Italy) and which of course must be in a manner under the nose of his Holiness, without meeting with a single parish-priest who was able to read. It seems they had all learnt the service by rote, and being in latin, they understood what they said just as well as did the mules they rode, or the congregation to whom they repeated it. Such prayer, of which they were not often participants, must be efficacious, because fervent and from the heart! But such neglect and indifference to these miserable flocks, is not to be paralleled even by your accounts of Ireland. In any case, why make these wretches pray in a language to them un-



known, unless it be to keep them in ignorance of what they pray for, and to whom they direct their prayers? If they prayed in a vulgar tongue, occasionally a man though unlearned, but endowed with a good natural understanding, might have some doubts touching the deities he worshipped, and their number; and such scruples might not so easily be satisfied: but when men pray in a language unknown to them, they neither know what they pray for, nor whom they address; and thus become *orthodox* christians in despite of their understandings.

It is not however my province to preach. To return therefore to the subject, neglect of duty; nothing less than the goodness of your own heart, and an unfeigned simplicity uncorrupted by a knowledge of the world, could have induced You to imagine there was any thing extraordinary in such neglect and indifference. If we contemplate solely the magnitude of the object, it might excite admiration

that such neglect should ever be prevalent; but if we look ever so little into the corrupt state of so pure an institution as christianity, all ground for admiration is done away. This, Sir, was the observation of a friend of mine, who proceeded thus: The profession, generally speaking, is now taken up with a view to gain throughout Europe, for the priests have by degrees so well increased the revenues of the church, which originally supplied them only with a very simple and moderate maintenance, that the priesthood is become a lucrative trade. The whole considered, no man can provide for a son so well, and at so cheap a rate, as by placing him in the church, and there, without abilities and without industry he may live in indolence, and plenty; under these considerations the stripling generally enlists in the service: and partly from hence are derived neglect of duty, and the various abuses of the office so prevalent at this day. Pluralities on the one hand, and immense emoluments granted to the superior officers



on the other, where slothful indolence has established her drowsy throne, are evidence to every one who can and will see, that your boasted religion is converted into a merchandize, the priests the traders and retailers, and who, as in all other trades, will give you the least of the commodity for the most money they can get. This practice, and this maxim are well established in every national church in Europe. The priests and bishops towards the conclusion of the first century, and the beginning of the second, both in the eastern and western churches, brooded over and reared this spirit, which in process of time assimilated with pride, ambition, and power, and thus avarice or the thirst of gain in conjunction with ambition, pride, and power attained strength and maturity at Rome, whence the contagion was spread over all christendom. And the priests, to use the expression of Isocrates, obtained such an increase of wealth and power, as they would not at first have presumed to ask Heaven for:—Τοσαυτην

εὐληφῶτα τὴν ἐπίδοσιν, οὐδ' αὖ ἐυζαΐσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς  
πρῶτερον ἡξίωσαν. Isoc. Orat. de Pace.

If these observations of my friend be just, neglect of duty is no subject of admiration; and seeing the priests are so indifferent in what relates to religion, and so anxious in pursuit of wealth which they have nothing to do with, it is rather matter of surprize that the multitude do not follow the examples of the literati of Paris and Rome, where it is computed that two thirds of them are deists. Wealth, in the priesthood as well as in the laity, is generally productive of vice and indolence; and the more is thrown into the lap of the priest, the more time will be lost in dalliance, to the neglect of more important duties; and by which neglect, if there be any merit in the institution, the public at large must suffer. That government is reduced to the painful necessity of almost decimating the inhabitants by ignominious deaths, may, for ought I know to the contrary, be in a great measure



imputed to this cause, which, if true, calls aloud for a remedy, but not from your hands; nor for a remedy which You yourself inform us has been totally ineffectual in the case of your Right-Boys, who, with all your boasted labours and instruction, were certainly in the wrong, and that too in every sense of the word; but You and your fraternity must have your proselytes as well as the Scribes and Pharisees though you pervade to the extremities of the earth for them, and when gained, they are \* NO BETTER (You see how tenderly I speak) than they were before.

Would it not be prudent, your situation considered, to desist from this practice, which You well know can prevail and take effect only among the lower classes of the people who are generally very illiterate; for as to the rest, I trust they have knowledge sufficient to put all priestcraft, of every denomination,

\* See MATT. xxiii. 15.

at defiance. Their good sense will operate, as the serpents of Moses, to devour the whole brood of Egyptian forcery. Bigotry and priestcraft have been detected, exploded, and I trust will never be successfully practised more. The priests have had their jubilee, when from moderate provision and station, they have artfully risen to power, wealth, and dignities, wholly incompatible with a christian priesthood; and by meddling with every thing, but what was really their duty, they attracted every thing within the vortex of the church, and in conclusion governed all. Rapacity brought on contention, contention produced schisms; schisms established, a contest for power succeeded, which, under the disguise of religion and bleeding in the cause of heaven, inspired the mania for cutting each others throats; the petty priests founded the clamour of war, their superiors grasped the truncheon, and, in the character of generals, led the deluded, bigotted mob to battle; while the the ruinous prize was to establish the wealth,



power, and pride of the priest; and at the same instant rivet the fetters of their own slavery.

Since these infatuated times, reason has gleamed more or less in most of the hemispheres of Europe; as that brightens, the forcery of priestcraft will hide its diminished head, and, fullen, retire from contempt. And as most things when at the worst stage generally begin to mend, we may live in the earnest expectation of a holy, not a vicious or rapacious priesthood; a priesthood consonant to their character, meek, gentle, humble, not thirsting after dignities, panting after gain, nor lusting for power; characters attended with disgrace, and tending most effectually to lessen them in the eye of the world; should the effect stop here, the magnitude of the calamity is great; but it may proceed still farther, and influence some indiscreet persons to cast indifference, not to say contempt, on the purest, most holy, and most beneficial

religion ever revealed to mankind. Indiscretion, I say, not reason, on contemplating such examples, may induce them to think and exclaim with the poet,—

*Gessit enim nummum in loculos dimittere, post hoc  
Securus, cadat, an recto stet fabula talo.*

You seem, Sir, to lament, if not on account of yourself, yet on behalf of your fraternity in Ireland, the paucity of the pittance, and the barrenness of the soil. What has the salary or the soil to do with the work you have undertaken, and are engaged in? You surely read your testament before You was admitted to the priesthood; nor were any of you forced into the service; and having now meat, drink, lodging and cloathing, You must know You have all that is appointed you, or any christian priest of what degree soever, by any of the four Gospels. It is in the Gospels we are to look for your appointment, and if You will shew me a single passage where more is granted to any christian priest, bishop or no bishop, for it



makes no difference, I will readily acknowledge myself not to know what I read. Had any of the apostles, your predecessors, more? often not so much; and Paul, who was indefatigable, and, I hope I may say without giving You or your fraternity offence, was as eloquent and as effectual a preacher as any of you, speaks of the ingratitude of some of his converts without repining, and of his distress in consequence thereof, even though he worked at his leisure hours with his own hands at his business for his support. Have You, Sir, so read your Testament that you need be informed, that no christian priest by the law of Christ, can claim more than a competency; which competency is to arise from voluntary contribution. What that competency is, the same Gospels will likewise inform You, because your habits are to be circumscribed by the precepts there laid down. They contain no precepts which enjoin expence, high living, or luxury; much less in the priests; and of course do not countenance any priest to

oppress the people with heavy contributions to enable him to live in a manner the Gospel condemns.

But the priest who has the competency I have mentioned, and persists in murmuring, speaks as one wholly ignorant of the conditions of his office; and wishes to grasp at wealth which his religion, as a priest, debars him from, as the reward of his labours; and does not appoint him that competency which it allows as a reward, but as a matter of necessity; while he is to look for the reward itself which is promised, in another world; on condition he performs his duty conscientiously.

As to the different orders or ranks that You have established among yourselves, no particular provision is made, because it is all human invention, and a corruption; bishops and cardinals, and the like, are still but priests, and every priest in the christian reli-



gion is on one and the same footing and establishment, and all on an equality even as the apostles were, how much soever the depravity of mankind may have perverted the institution:—“ But Jesus called them unto  
“ him, and said, Ye know that the princes  
“ of the gentiles exercise dominion over them,  
“ and they that are great exercise authority  
“ upon them. But it shall not be so among  
“ you; but whosoever will be great among  
“ you, let him be your minister: and who-  
“ soever will be chief among you, let him be  
“ your servant.” *Matt. xx. 25, et seq.*

— This, Sir, laying my hand on my heart, I do avow according to my best judgment to be the religion of Christ, in this matter; and from my conscience I do believe, that those among You who think and act otherwise have much to answer for. The duty of a priest, without confounding ourselves with highest and lowest, is, if there be any truth in revealed religion, the most important of all du-

ties: for this reason Christ meant it should be entrusted in the hands of men who to perform it sedulously should not be liable to be deceived, corrupted or beguiled by the allurements of wealth; and the most efficacious method of accomplishing this, was to do as he has done, that is, Not to give it them.

Experience has proved, and the truth is daily confirmed, that to enrich the church is bribing its own guards to undermine christianity; in which, by their manners and conversation, they have been so successful, that the small portion of genuine christianity remaining, seems principally confined to those who have supplied themselves with it from its pure fountain, and not through the medium of a priest; who generally comes into the church to make all he can of it, and who entered on that service as the most lucrative and beneficial mode of life he could pursue; and to whom is justly applicable the expression of Paul when he says, "For they that



“are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ,  
“but their own belly.” From such men  
what is to be expected, but that their thoughts  
will be fixed on things below, and not on  
things above; and that they will suffer them-  
selves to be surpassed in their duty even by a  
heathen, who advises attention may be paid  
to things eternal, and not to the business of  
this short and trifling life? *Tempus est*, says  
Cicero, *nos de illa perpetua, non de hac exigua  
vita cogitare*. Paul in his charge to the over-  
seers of the church, which in our translation  
are called *bishops*, and to which mankind have  
annexed a strange idea, cautions them parti-  
cularly against filthy lucre, and the desire of  
gain or covetousness, 1 *Tim.* iii. 3.: and  
again, 1 *Tim.* vi. 8. he expressly says, “And  
“having food and raiment let us be therewith  
“content. But they that will be rich fall  
“into temptation, and a snare, and into many  
“foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men  
“in destruction and perdition. For the love  
“of money is the root of all evil: which

“while some have coveted after, they have  
“erred from the faith, and pierced themselves  
“through with many sorrows. But thou, O  
“man of God, flee these things and follow  
“after righteousness, godliness, faith, love,  
“patience, meekness.” Paul had never pre-  
sumed to give this charge, had he not known  
it was the will of Christ that no priest should  
be enriched by the Gospel; and that it is  
incompatible with a sacred office to convert  
it into worldly gain. This is truly simony,  
as far as that crime can be practised at this  
day; it is converting the holy gift of God  
into lucre, and is a violent profanation of things  
most sacred. Some of the primitive over-  
seers of the church, such as Polycarp, Igna-  
tius, and Origen have trodden in the same path  
with Paul, and repeated the same doctrine; it  
is true, in vain; but why should this be mat-  
ter of surprize, when the doctrine of Paul, and  
even that of Christ is despised; and unless  
there be a thorough reform the very heathens  
will put the christian priesthood to the blush?



Every vice, says Diodorus Siculus, is to be avoided by men in their senses, but especially the desire of wealth, which under the disguise of utility, entices many to evil, and becomes the source of the greatest mischiefs among mankind. For being the emporium of injuries it is productive of very many and great misfortunes.—

Πασαν μὲν κακίαν φευκτέον ἐστὶ τοῖς  
 ἡσυχασταῖς, μάλιστα δὲ τὴν πλεονεξίαν. αὕτη γὰρ διὰ  
 τὴν ἐκ τοῦ συμφερόντος ἐλπίδα προκαλούμενη πολλὰς  
 πρὸς ἀδικίαν, μεγίστων κακῶν αἰτία γίνεται τοῖς ἀν-  
 ἄνθρωποις. διὸ καὶ μητροπόλεις οὗσαι τῶν ἀδικημάτων  
 πολλὰς καὶ μεγάλας ἀπεργάζεται συμφοράς.—

Eclog. Diod. Sic. p. 863. I could produce a variety of passages from Isocrates, Socrates, and other ancient oracles of wisdom to the same purpose; but the christian priesthood confirm me in my opinion by their actions, that when gain is in question, they are too wise to be dictated to by any oracles whether sacred or prophane.

Nevertheless, Sir, it might be prudent

in your situation, not to repine either in behalf of yourself, or your fraternity in Ireland, at the pittance of your appointment; nor to weigh with uplifted scales your merits and indefatigable labours against it; for in so doing you are unjust to Heaven, seeing you do not take your future reward into the balance; that reward which alone will preponderate, and overflow every measure You can bring to mete it withal; for I trust as You are a priest of the gospel, that you have at least full confidence and faith in its promises.

I have proceeded much farther than I intended in my answer, and yet I cannot conclude without endeavouring to set You right in a particular or two where I conceive You to be mistaking. You insinuate, that persons of your religious persuasion should be indulged in their religion in protestant countries, and for this reason; That protestants may enjoy the like indulgence in roman catholic countries. So that You think they stand on the



same footing, and that the reciprocal objections are equally alike valid. If this be your meaning and opinion I must certainly beg leave to differ from You. I am neither morose on the one hand, nor a bigot on the other; and will so long as I enjoy my senses enlist under the banners of civil and religious liberty; had not these been my sentiments, I should have troubled neither You nor myself with this answer; but priestly tyranny is lay oppression; and the more is grasped by the church, the less remains for the laity, whether it respects conscience, property, or any thing else; it is from the laity that all their wealth and power is taken, for both cannot have the same thing at one and the same time. But waving this subject for the present, and returning to the indulgence we were speaking of, You must see with a cast of your eye, that roman catholics and protestants cannot be considered on the same footing in this matter: and that the protestant has a claim to indulgence, which the roman catholic cannot plead.

The roman catholic priest, and I suppose the same tenet is instilled by them into the laity, every moment that he is in a protestant country is in a state of tacit warfare at least with the Supreme Magistracy. It is true it may not always break forth in overt acts, because there may be no fair and promising opportunity of success; but the train is always ready laid; grant but an opportunity offers, the spark will soon be found to set it on fire and give the explosion; and a foreign supremacy in ecclesiastical matters is established. This foreign supremacy established, give it but scope to act, it will in the bustle soon swallow up civil supremacy, or bring it under its dominion, by a magic peculiar to the church, as I have before observed, of attracting every thing within its own \* vortex, and thence conveying it into its profound abyfs; from

\* Nothing less than an all-grasping rapaciousness, taking advantage of the barbarous ignorance of a deluded laity could have ~~suffered~~ the priesthood to seize on the pecuniary emoluments arising on marriages, slander, testaments, and a hun-

*urged and enabled*



whence nothing returns, or can be recovered but with the utmost reluctance and difficulty. Now, Sir, a protestant in a roman catholic country has nothing of this nature to interest or influence him; he has not so much as a wish arising from religion, or any other motive to deprive the Supreme Magistracy of any country of any part of its power, title, or authority; and can take an oath of abjuration with the same complacency as one of reverence and submission; and thus no roman catholic Prince however tenacious of his rights, and though as solicitous to preserve them from violence as a maiden her chastity, has nothing to apprehend or alarm him on the part of protestants, who if protected, and permitted to enjoy their religion in peace and quiet, will give him no disquiet in the full enjoyment of *all* his authority. On

dred other articles in which religion is no more concerned than in a man's paring his nails; and nothing but the folly of a people bigotted to custom would permit them to continue it, and not confine them to their only province, religion, and the duties of an office so shamefully neglected.

this state of the matter there appears to me to be a very wide difference between the two, and every impartial mind must see the balance of indulgence is wholly in favor of the protestant.

You have another complaint, and I am pleased to recollect it, because it will give me an opportunity of saying what I should otherwise have forgot. Your complaint alluded to, is the severity of certain laws against roman catholics. I cannot, I will not arraign the judgment and wisdom of our ancestors in this matter ; to form a judgment whether or not when enacted they were severe, You must take a good view of the times which produced them, and of the treatment which caused them : and when You have candidly done this, I think you must allow they were dictated by prudence and wisdom, for the purpose of self-defence and security. At present, the same apprehensions may not exist from a variety of causes ; fiery persecutions may be



smothered, if not totally quenched among You; and mankind are now, though they were not then, wiser than to commit every crime and enormity, as they thought with impunity, provided it was done under the sanction of the nod of the priest. For these reasons, and not from any attachment to your tenets, I could wish You, and every one of you to enjoy free liberty of conscience, and the exercise of your religion, not in parade, but in peace and quiet; desisting however from the trade of making profelytes, which I hope You will never be permitted to practice. It is all that can be required of any reasonable and conscientious man who professes a religion so totally subversive of that of the country in which he lives, and is at the same time restrictive of the supreme authority of the civil Magistrate, that he may enjoy his religious opinions and worship without molestation. Whoever seeks more than this, has some bad design, and ought to be restrained.

You have now, Sir, my answer to your late publication, in which it will be readily acknowledged, that it was not so much consulted how palatable it might be to You, as how consonant it is to sound reason, and to promote the cause of pure religion for the benefit of mankind. Having no inclination to add to what has been advanced, shall conclude with wishing You may partake of every lenity of Government which your conduct may merit; persuaded, the laws will never offend You, unless You first offend the laws by a violation too gross to be overlooked; from which, an infusion of a due proportion of moderation to temper your zeal will ever secure You.—

I beg leave to subscribe myself,

*PHILEMON.*



